



PLAYING TO STRENGTH Living one's life as a vegan is a clear first step for many, but then what? There are countless ways in which motivated individuals can use their gifts to reduce animal suffering each day. The possibilities are limited only by our creativity.

There is no one-size-fits-all method of activism. What are your strengths/weaknesses? What do you enjoy doing? How can you live a happy, purposeful life and help the animals to the greatest degree possible? The answers, of course, are different for each of us, and sometimes our answers change over time.

While creative thinking and playing to one's strengths can open up new avenues for promoting veganism, rigid adherence to doctrine can obstruct advocacy. Isn't one's time better spent distributing vegan literature than tracing the origins of obscure ingredients? In order to be effective advocates, the decisions we make—both on a daily basis and long-term—must offer a net benefit to the animals.

Vegans can remain true to their ideals regardless of whether or not they engage in traditional methods of activism. Although striving to acquire great wealth is seen by many as the antithesis of activism, those who earn large amounts of money through business can have an enormous impact on animal liberation when they contribute funds to organizations/activities aimed at reducing animal suffering.

Diverse and committed people have lent their talents to all aspects of Vegan Outreach. However, if not for those who pursue other fields and financially support the printing of *WHY VEGAN* and *VEGETARIAN LIVING*, we would be unable to reach anyone with our information. It is because of our members' hard work in fields not directly related to animal rights that we have the funds needed to print and distribute literature around the world.

CONSTRUCTIVE OUTREACH In order to spread vegetarianism and veganism effectively, our focus should be on educating people with credible, persuasive, and focused literature; providing well-documented and thorough answers for specific questions; supplying educational materials to schools; working to get vegan options in various settings; working with food manufacturers, grocery stores, and restaurants for more options; and supplying people with lists of local restaurants and shopping opportunities where vegan options exist.

Our experience has shown that the most effective way to accomplish the above is through understanding and constructive outreach. Positive outreach takes patience and can be frustrating, but it is worth the effort. We don't have to force people to notice us; simply being confident, articulate vegans in public is enough.

Some specific activities that can lead to people learning about veganism are:

- ◆ **Putting a reference (URLs or quotes) in your email address or email signature.**
- ◆ **Wearing clothes that say "vegan" or "vegetarian."** This creates opportunities to give literature to people who ask.
- ◆ **Writing articles for/letters to publications,** including newsletters of local groups (e.g., your local chapter of the Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, Food not Bombs, etc.). Tell a story tailored to the audience that gives the readers a way of identifying with you.
- ◆ **Displaying information in public areas,** such as hanging copies of *WHY VEGAN* and/or *VEGETARIAN LIVING** on your office door. Many have reported great success in displaying them at health food stores, restaurants, libraries, etc. Also, posters and display prints can be downloaded from the Vegan Outreach web site—perfect for campus bulletin boards.

*A less graphic version of *WHY VEGAN*, with a different order and weighting of subjects, which may be more appropriate for some audiences and may be allowed for display in areas where *WHY VEGAN* is not.

- ◆ **Providing people with good vegan food.** Although this sounds obvious, it is far from easy. Our general advice now is to serve easily prepared, relatively simple foods (e.g., pasta, potatoes, beans, casseroles) with different sauces, perhaps with a new food as an



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appetizer (e.g., hummus). If serving vegetarian “meats,” we suggest providing standard condiments (mustard, pickles, etc.).

• **Joining/starting a local veg-an society.**

Many people will be significantly helped by some support structure—shopping references, dining guides, potlucks, etc. Your group can write guest columns, seek out speaking engagements in schools and clubs, give cooking classes, work with local schools and restaurants to increase vegan options, show documentaries, etc. There is really no limit to this.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TABLING

The initial impression is crucial in establishing a dialogue. Displays, needed to attract visitors, should clearly and simply convey the area of concern. Large-screen TVs are always magnets for attracting people, to whom you can then offer literature. Consider your audience and location when you choose which pictures to display or videos to show. Graphic images of animal torture upset children, while teenagers and younger adults are most likely to be moved by these photographs.

Be clean, well-groomed, and conservatively dressed. Counter-culture attire, except where this is the norm, sends the message that your world radically differs from that of your audience. This creates a barrier between you and prospective visitors who may react with a feeling of distrust, even hostility. Remember, you are there as a spokesperson for the animals, and should not let anything come between your audience and your message.

Your credibility will increase if you actively listen: repeat a visitor’s main points using different words, showing that you understand. Then, ask thought-provoking but courteous questions. Seek common ground with your visitors by emphasizing shared goals or concerns. Acknowledge your table visitors’ valid points or observations. Don’t turn the encounter into a debate or personal attack; keep it a mutual exploration of the issues.

If the main barrier seems to be the visitors’ desire to continue habits that they find pleasant—such as sport fishing or wearing fur—mention any of your own relevant changes in lifestyle. In response to a declaration such as “I could never give up meat,” you might relate something of your own eating habits: e.g., “I used to feel the

same way, and at first I just cut back on meat. Now that I’m vegetarian, I’ve found that I really don’t miss meat. In fact, I feel good about my diet, being more at peace with the world around me.” Such an honest admission of your own feelings can build rapport. When people say something a little obnoxious, smile and wish them a good day. If they say something really mean, you might say, “That was a mean thing to say.” If said as an observation, without a tone of bitterness, it will possibly get them thinking.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEAFLETTING

The great thing about leafletting is the lack of preparation time required. At the right time and place, just one person can hand out hundreds of brochures in less than an hour. You will inevitably interest many new people in making their way toward veganism, sowing seeds of change where they do not currently exist.

Students tend to be more interested in veganism than the rest of society, making college campuses good places to leaflet; weekdays before 3 p.m. are the busiest times. At large universities, there is normally a steady flow of pedestrian traffic somewhere on campus at all times throughout the day. Smaller colleges and universities usually have a steady flow of traffic between classes.

You can find a spot where many pedestrians are passing, or you can walk around offering the brochure to people you come across (which makes you less conspicuous). Some schools have an open policy on allowing leafletting, while others do not. Even if someone eventually tells you that you are not permitted to hand out literature on campus, it will likely be after you’ve given out a great number of brochures.

People who take part in walkathons in order to raise money for causes tend to be willing to



Tips for Spreading Veganism



accept literature. (We target these people because we think they are likely to take a brochure, read it, and thoughtfully consider moving towards veganism, not because WHY VEGAN has anything to do with the cause for which they are walking.) Animal-related events, such as humane society benefits or animal rights presentations, are also a good place to reach interested and committed individuals who may not have considered the implications of their own diet, or the idea of promoting veganism.

While leafletting, keep in mind:

- We have found that “Would you like a pamphlet about vegetarianism?” or “Have you seen one of these yet?” are effective ways of offering literature to people (and minimize the number thrown away).
- Many activists are nervous about leafletting. In our experience, nervousness often fades once you’ve offered the brochure to a few people.
- Besides WHY VEGAN, Vegan Outreach can supply you with copies of our VEGAN STARTER PACK for people with questions.
- One person can make an enormous difference. Many people will pass the information on to others, causing a chain reaction.

PERSONAL INTERACTION Few people have any interest in engaging a religious zealot bent on converting them. Similarly, when animal rights advocates give the impression that they are trying to convert people, people resist the message. One activist reports what has worked for him:

I started at a new university almost a year ago. I wore my sweatshirt and t-shirts that say Vegan Outreach on them at least every third day. For months, only a few people said anything to me. Some of them joke with me about eating meat. I don't act offended, and try to continue the conversation. Slowly, over time, more and more people ask questions. I try not to be pushy, but offer them a WHY VEGAN pamphlet when the circumstances are right.



Our conversations used to go somewhat like this:

Potential Vegan (PV): *Oh, so you're a vegan. I know someone else who is vegan. You know, I really think it's terrible how they treat the animals, but I could never do it. Animal products are in everything, aren't they?*

Vegan: *They are in a lot of things. But you figure out what you can and can't eat and then it becomes easier.*

PV: *It just takes too much discipline for me.*

Vegan: *I could give you a list of the names of all the different possible animal ingredients. There's less than 10,000 of them! And I can give you a list of 500 companies and whether they test on animals or not. It's not so bad. Hey, where are you going?*

Now our answer goes:

Vegan: *To me, veganism is not about personal purity, but a way to stop suffering. You don't have to avoid every animal product, just the obvious ones for which an animal was bred, raised, and eventually killed. Some vegans avoid all they can as a symbolic gesture, but minuscule amounts of animal products or by-products will fade away as the meat, dairy, and egg industries fade.*

Sometimes a potential vegan will say, “I could just never give up ice cream (or cheese, etc.)” Some vegans now reply, “Then give up everything but ice cream.” These types of reactions will often surprise the potential vegan and make them realize that veganism is not about making yourself pure, but about doing what you can to stop suffering.

People often try to sidestep the issue by talking about everything from Eskimos eating fish to being stranded on a desert island. To be effective, we have to bring conversations back to the fact that eating animal products causes suffering, and each of us can work to avoid creating this suffering.

We should not simply try to feel that we have won an argument with a meat eater. Rather, we need people to consider the issues in depth and want to change. If we are to reach people's hearts and minds, and help them utilize the power of their choices, we must make people aware that we are sincere individuals who have made informed decisions. We must show everyone that we have decided to use our choices to make a positive statement about how the world should—and can—be. Only then will others be inclined to join us in creating a new world.



Cover photos (clockwise): Basla Andolsun at U of NM; display set up by Precious James Powell at U of GA library; Chelsea Lincoln at U of OR; Marsha Forsman at Chicago Earth Day event; Philip Rutkowski at U of PA Econference 2000.

Page 2: VO display table at AR2000; Mark McEahern at U of WI, Madison; Speak Out of Allendale, NJ; Katja Hrores at Harvard; Jack Norris at U of WA; Matt Ball at Seton Hill College, Greensburg, PA.

Page 3: Joe Espinosa at Chicago Earth Day event; Philip at U of PA; Kevin P. O'Gallagher at U of CO at Denver; Dave Costa at MI State; Michael Tucker at FL International U; “Which item on this tray is the most harmful to the environment?” display by Vegetarian Solutions of Atlanta, GA; Tommy Nail of Allen, TX.

Activism and Veganism Reconsidered:

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In the past twenty years, the animal rights (AR) movement has made the public aware of many issues concerning animals. During this time, unfortunately, per-capita meat consumption has risen, and the number of animals killed in the United States has increased by hundreds of millions each year.

It may be possible to help small numbers of animals by stopping blatant, socially unacceptable forms of cruelty. But true animal liberation can only be possible by changing deeply ingrained patterns of thought about animals—specifically, that animals exist for humans to use.

Fundamental Facts The number of animals killed for fur in the U.S. each year is approximately equal to the human population of Illinois. The number of animals killed in experimentation in the U.S. each year is approximately equal to the human population of Texas. The number of mammals and birds farmed and slaughtered in the U.S. each year is approximately equal to one and two-thirds the entire human population of Earth.

Over 99% of the animals killed in the U.S. each year die to be eaten. Everyone makes choices directly determining the fates of these animals when deciding what to eat each day.

Because most people eat animals, the commonplace view remains that animals are tools and commodities. There are a million symptoms of this view—small-scale yet highly visible abuses that always seem to demand our attention: canned hunts, circuses, cockfighting, fur, horse racing, etc. Many activists burn out because of the never-ending torrent of these “battles” around them and the difficulty in winning even the smallest “victory.”

This cycle will continue until there is a fundamental change in society. The only way to make this happen is by convincing people to stop eating animals.

Question Authority We expect the general public to question everything they assume and have ever been told about food, traditions, health, etc. Given the enormity of the task at hand, the increase in the number of animals killed each year, and the relative paucity of our resources, I believe we too must constantly question everything we assume and have ever been told about our activism and veganism. My assumptions and ego have harmed the effectiveness of my advocacy in the past. I offer these lessons learned solely as consider-

ations for improving advocacy, not as argument or judgement.

Hoop Dreams A basketball coach once told me: “Practice doesn’t make perfect. Poorly

The number of animals killed for fur in the U.S. each year is approximately equal to the human population of Illinois.



planned and executed practice, no matter how hard you work, tends to just reinforce bad habits and will ultimately only make you a worse player.

“Only perfect practice makes perfect.”

The number of animals killed in experimentation in the U.S. each year is approximately equal to the human population of Texas.



The same can be said about activism. No matter how angry we are, how much we believe in something, how hard we work, or how much we suffer, our activities can be useless or even counter-productive. We should always strive to think clearly, get good counsel, be willing to admit our mistakes, and change course in midstream if necessary (however ego-damaging this can be). If our efforts are not part of a well-defined and thought-through plan, we will spin our wheels.

Main Point During the time the AR movement has been visible in the U.S. (since ~1980), AR activists have stopped some abuses, received media attention, and become a fixture of pop

culture. Yet after two decades, with hundreds of millions of dollars spent and possibly a similar number of hours of work devoted, almost twice as many animals will be killed in the U.S. this year as were killed in 1980.

In the U.S., given the quantity of non-human animals suffering, the extent to which they are suffering, and the reason they are intentionally made to suffer, I believe that animal liberation is the moral imperative of our time. Our entire focus should be on ending the suffering as efficiently and quickly as possible.

I believe we have an ethical obligation to recognize and set aside all of our personal baggage and to perform an objective analysis of both the pros/cons and costs/benefits of our choice of focus, our choice of tactics, and the example we choose to present to the public.

Focus: Limited Resources

Along with anger, guilt is a highly motivating emotion among activists. If we know of a highly visible case of animal exploitation, we feel that we must take action against it.

As much as we don’t want to admit it, though, we *can’t* do everything: when we choose to pursue one thing, we are choosing not to pursue others.

Compared to the public as a whole and the companies which exploit animals, AR activists have extremely limited resources: money, time, and emotional energy. Instead of reacting to whatever visible abuses that come up or following the leads of other activists, utilizing our limited resources so as to maximize their results should be our first priority.

There are a host of people out there who *are* open to our efforts, while those who profit from the industries that exploit animals are not. Shouldn’t we gain strength in numbers by first focusing the bulk of our energies into persuading those people who are willing to listen to our message?

Money, Immediacy, and Victories

Some contend that small-scale, high-profile cases provide a hook to allow organizations to raise money and gain new members. Others argue that victories can help energize activists who would otherwise burn out on actions that don’t have a tangible payoff. Although these

Personal Thoughts at the New Millennium

are valid considerations, these potential positives must be weighed against other factors.

Hegins One example of our movement's priorities is the Hegins pigeon shoot—one of the primary AR accomplishments of the 1990s. Immense amounts of money and human effort went into this campaign. Ending the Hegins pigeon shoot has saved ~5,000 animals each year—the number of animals that die in U.S. slaughterhouses every 16 seconds.

In the future, we need to decide if the animals are best served by this type of allocation of resources. If we choose not to decide, we still have made a choice.

Tactics Given the wide range of animal abuses and the various situations in which activists find themselves, I believe it is not possible to make a blanket statement that a specific tactic is unquestionably positive or always harmful. For example, a certain type of demonstration, when run in a relevant situation and with a respectful, clear message, can possibly raise the public's awareness, receive fair media coverage, and encourage some activists. The same type of demonstration, run under different circumstances and with an outrageous message made through chants, shouts, and/or stunts, can serve to harm the progression of animal liberation by alienating the public and frustrating thoughtful activists.

Like deciding where to focus our limited resources, decisions about tactics must be made in the larger context of our goals. Why are we doing this (e.g., is it because of anger and guilt, or because it is a strategic step that serves our larger goal)? What is the most probable outcome? What effect will it have on the public? On other activists? What other activities could we do with the same time and resources, and would one of those options have a greater effect overall? Again, I believe that we have an obligation to ask these questions.

The Media Circus Many activists feel that the worth of their activism or event is based on how much media coverage they receive. It is not necessary, however, to focus one's activism on getting media attention.

Trying to use the media has a number of drawbacks. There is rarely enough time to present a full and compelling case for veganism.

Nor is there time enough to get into important nutritional aspects that need attention in order to follow a vegan diet successfully. Furthermore, the media makes opponents aware of our efforts. This enables animal exploiters to mobilize against us, as well as providing them with a free venue in which to disagree with us, since reports invariably give them equal or better air-time. Many in the media will only air something if they feel they are able to make us look silly, or like vandals and terrorists. Others make the entire issue of animal liberation (regardless of whether it was originally about fur, meat, or hunting) into "your baby or your dog."

All of the above drawbacks can be avoided by handing out detailed and accurate information about veganism in one-on-one situations. You might reach fewer people, but you will be providing them with thorough information, versus a sound bite that is easy to dismiss or forget.

The number of mammals and birds farmed and slaughtered for food in the U.S. each year is approximately equal to one and two-thirds the entire human population of Earth.

Why Veganism? Spreading information about how veganism prevents animal suffering helps to move individuals (and thus society) away from relying on animal exploitation for a fundamental, daily activity—eating. Once individuals have broken their attachment to a daily reliance on animal exploitation, it is much easier for them to reject *all* animal exploitation, rather than just the high-profile abuses committed by others. As more people understand and act by the tenets of veganism, it will be significantly easier for others to join them. This will bring pressure to bear on other animal issues, and achievement of our goals will be accelerated.

But we don't need a majority in order to make a huge reduction in animal suffering by spreading veganism: if 5% of Americans were to stop eating animals, more suffering would be prevented than if we completely abolished every other form of animal exploitation in the U.S.

Promoting veganism brings about the fundamental change that is needed. Done at a reasonable pace, it can sustain activists who would otherwise burn out in the face of endless

"battles." It can be hard to put fundamental change ahead of expressing our anger in small battles, but it is necessary if progress is to be made towards animal liberation.

The Health Argument As Donna Maurer concluded in her dissertation (1997) about the vegetarian movement in North America, "the strategies that vegetarian groups enact to promote 'healthy diets' for each individual's personal benefit inhibit people from adopting a collective vegetarian identity based on moral concern regarding human/animal relationships; without commitment to this moral concern, 'being a vegetarian' is a lifestyle vulnerable to changing personal and cultural tastes."

Many activists believe the health argument to be the most effective for promoting vegetarianism because it is the least threatening and appeals to people's self-interest. We question whether this is really the best tactic for the following reasons:

■ Even if ethics is not as effective as the health argument at initially persuading some people, those who are motivated to change based on ethics will be better spokespersons for veganism. In the promotion of animal liberation, each individual's example and actions as a spokesperson are at least as important as the economic impact their individual choices have. Promoting a "plant-based" diet for health reasons feeds our society's focus on selfishness by implying that animal suffering is not worthy of people's concern. It delays the time when we, as a society, will come to terms with our treatment of animals.

■ Diets based on health claims are subject to further change based on new, low-fat animal products and fad diets (*THE ZONE*, *EAT RIGHT FOR YOUR TYPE*, etc.). People who follow a vegetarian or vegan diet to feel healthier will resume consuming animal products if they feel no improvement. Because they do not necessarily have their hearts into being vegetarian or vegan, they often will not experiment with it long enough to find a way of eating that makes them feel healthy. This can have far-reaching, negative effects as they go on to tell others how unhealthy they felt when they were veg.

■ In the past twenty years, the number of animals killed has skyrocketed because of the move toward eating more chickens and fish,

There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil...

brought about in part because of people trying to eat less red meat for health reasons.

■ Health claims regarding the benefits of vegetarianism can often be exaggerated and/or incomplete. Because so many people have health questions regarding a vegetarian diet, all activists should honestly educate themselves with current and complete nutritional information. When people ask about health, we can confidently state that a vegan diet can be healthy and explain which nutrients might be of concern. (For the information Vegan Outreach considers the most up-to-date and scientifically-thorough, please see: <http://www.veganoutreach.org/health>)

The Vegan Example In general, people do not want to believe that they are supporting cruelty by eating animal products. They don't want to give up convenience and their favorite foods, and they don't want to separate themselves from their friends and family. So it is unlikely that people will even listen to our message—let alone think about changing—if they perceive vegans as joyless misanthropes.

There often appears to be a contest among vegans for discovering new connections to animal exploitation (of course, links can be found everywhere if one looks hard enough). This attitude makes us appear fanatical and gives many people an excuse to ignore our message.

Some vegans claim sugar (and products containing sugar, like Tofutti) isn't vegan because some sugar processing uses bone char as a whitening agent. Bone char is also used as a source of activated carbon in some water filters and by some municipal water treatment plants. (These plants also use tests that involve animal products, and water itself has been tested on animals.) So should we say water isn't "vegan"?

The vast majority of people in our society have no problem gnawing on an actual chicken leg. Yet we make an issue of honey, despite the fact that insects and other animals are killed in the process of planting, raising, harvesting, and transporting our vegan food. It is no wonder that many people dismiss us as unreasonable and irrational when they are told (or when it is implied by our actions) that they must not eat veggie burgers cooked on the same grill with

"meat," drink wine, take photographs, use medications, etc.; some vegans even tack on other political or religious ideologies.

Busting the Vegan Police It is imperative for us to realize that if our veganism is a statement for animal liberation, veganism cannot be an exclusive, ego-boosting club. Rather, we must become the mainstream. Fostering the impression that "it's so hard to be vegan—animal products are in everything," and emphasizing animal products where the connection to animal suffering is tenuous, works against this by allowing most to ignore us and causing others to give up the whole process out of frustration.

The way veganism is presented to a potential vegan is of major importance. The attractive idea behind being a "vegan" is reducing one's contribution to animal exploitation. Buying meat, eggs, and/or dairy creates animal suffering—animals will be raised and slaughtered specifically for these products. But if the by-products are not sold, they will be thrown out or given away. As more people stop eating animals, the by-products will naturally fade, so there is no real reason to force other people to worry about them in order to call themselves "vegan."

We want a vegan world, not a vegan club.

Practical and Symbolic Vegans Most vegans have multiple motivations, but primary motivations often distinguish vegans, such as "health vegans" or "spiritual/religious vegans." I see another type of distinction as being useful: "practical vegans" and "symbolic vegans." Practical vegans avoid the specific products for which animals are bred, raised, and eventually slaughtered. Every product they choose to avoid can be directly and causally linked to animal suffering. Symbolic vegans, in addition to avoiding those products, go beyond this to some level (e.g., avoiding sugar but not water) so as to be able to make a statement (about solidarity with the animals, personal purity, etc.).

Illustration The gelatin in film makes many vegans uncomfortable. However, film companies won't use something more expensive because of this discomfort. As long as animals are slaughtered for their flesh, gelatin will remain a dirt-cheap by-product. This won't change because of a relatively few symbolic

vegans. It *will* change, however, as the number of practical vegans expands and there isn't an endless string of animals being slaughtered for food, making a substitute necessary.

In dealing with others, practical vegans can explain: "I don't buy products that directly cause animal suffering—things for which animals are bred, raised, and slaughtered. A symbolic vegan could add: "Personally, I choose to go further and avoid film [sugar, etc.] as a symbolic gesture."

Once the demand for primary animal products shrinks and the by-products are no longer so cheap, companies will find new filtering methods, new ways to cure concrete, new means of producing steel and rubber, new blood-test methods, etc. As more people are concerned with animals, farming practices will be altered so fewer animals are harmed and killed during planting and harvesting of vegan food.

The Future: A New Vision We need an articulated and actionable plan for bringing about animal liberation. In the current view, we spend our resources and energy "fighting battles" where they occur and on the exploiters' terms. We need to move beyond this war imagery to a constructive approach.

No matter how many chants we shout, no matter how many sound bites we gain, no matter how many labs we vandalize or "enemies" we defeat, animal liberation *will not occur* until we join with *everyone* in a vegan world. If there is to be a fundamental change in the manner in which other animals are viewed—if there is to be animal liberation—there can be no "us and them."

There is hope for animal liberation if and only if we learn how to help people get past their wall of denial and manifest their latent compassion. To succeed, our interactions with others must be rooted in empathy and understanding—working with and from a person's motivations, fears, desires, and shortcomings. Instead of approaching with a "fighting" mindset, which necessarily makes people defensive and closed to new ideas, we should provide people with information that they can digest on their own time and act upon at a sustainable pace. Only then will real progress be made.

...to one who is striking at the root... Henry David Thoreau, *WALDEN*, 1854



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Anger, Humor, and Advocacy BY MATT BALL

AS A REACTION TO WHAT GOES ON in factory farms and slaughterhouses, very strong feelings are understandable and entirely justified. But I believe that our inability—individually and as a movement—to deal with our anger in a constructive manner is one of the greatest hindrances to the advancement of animal liberation.

Over time, people tend to deal with their anger in different ways. Some take to protesting, some to screaming, hatred, and sarcasm. Others disconnect from society and surround themselves with only like-minded people, seeing society as a large conspiracy against veganism. I do not believe any of this does much to move society towards being more compassionate.

A different approach is to try to maintain a positive outlook and a sense of humor. This makes it easier to continue in activism and to avoid self-righteous fundamentalism, and also makes it possible to interact positively and constructively with others.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to gain and maintain a sense of humor.

One suggestion is to always remember your ultimate goal. In my case, it is the alleviation of suffering. If I allow myself to be miserable because of the cruelty in the

world, I am adding to the suffering in the world. More importantly, I am saying that unless utopia is instantaneously established, it is not possible to be happy. Thus, my goal is fundamentally unachievable.

To have any change occur in the world, we need to convince others to think beyond themselves. We must be willing to do the same. Just as we want others to look beyond the short-term satisfaction of following habits and traditions, we need to move past our anger to effective advocacy (e.g., moving from yelling and chanting to constructive educational outreach). If I claim that I can't be happy—that I am a slave to my situation—how can I expect others to be able to act differently?

It also helps to maintain a historical perspective. I realize that I am not the first person to be upset by the state of affairs in the world. I can learn from the mistakes and successes of those who came before me.

Few people came to an enlightened view of the world by themselves and overnight. It took me over a year after my first exposure to the issues to go vegetarian, and even longer after that to go vegan. If I had been treated with disgust and anger because of my close-mindedness and pathetic (in

retrospect) rationalizations, I would certainly never have gone veg.

My story is not unique. Not only does it show the shortcomings of anger and the benefits of patience, it also indicates that you shouldn't give up on your friends if they don't react to information as you would like them to. Shunning your friends because they don't immediately adopt your vegan views not only cuts you off from the very people we need to reach, it also perpetuates the stereotype of the joyless fanatic with no life other than complaining.

"Fighting" suffering is not the only way to make a better world; creating happiness and joy as part of a thoughtful, compassionate life can be an even more powerful tool for creating change.

As long as there is conscious life on Earth, there will be suffering. The question becomes what to do with the existence each of us is given. We can choose to add our own fury and misery to the rest, or we can set an example by simultaneously working constructively to alleviate suffering while leading joyous, meaningful, fulfilled lives.

Being a vegan isn't about deprivation, sobriety, and wallowing in misery. It's about being fully aware so as to be fully alive.



Selecting Information for Advocacy

BY MATT BALL

In today's society, it seems that if you don't scream the loudest, you are not heard. Because moderate voices are often drowned out, it can feel necessary to make fantastic claims in order to advance your cause.

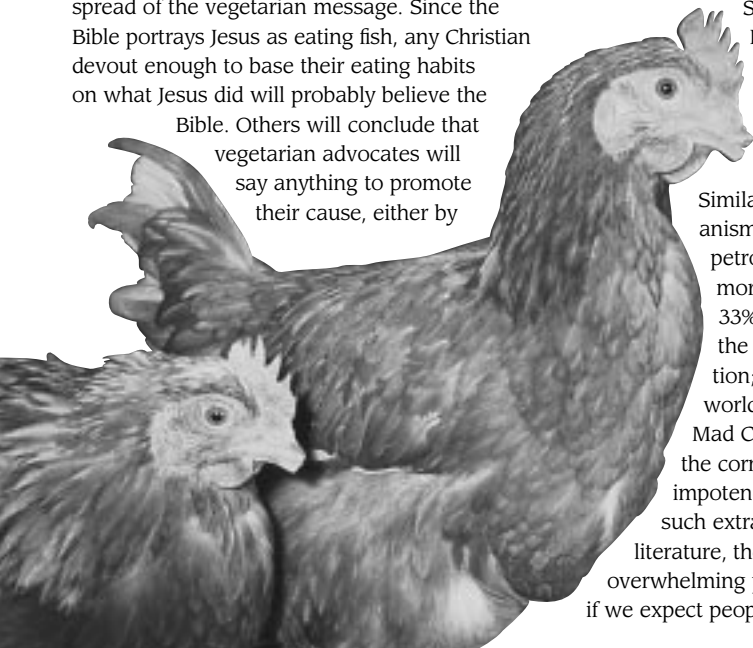
There is a natural tendency for uncritical acceptance of claims we want to believe. In the long run, however, I believe that this causes more harm than good, because we lose support from people who have come to realize that we are not objective, and we miss chances to convince people who are inherently skeptical. Furthermore, most people are looking for some reason to dismiss us. Thus, it is imperative that we present information the public won't regard as ludicrous and from sources that they won't dismiss as partisan.

Some Potential Problems

There are several traps when it comes to choosing information. These include:

◆ Starting with a desired claim and selectively building an argument to support that claim. This can be particularly harmful when the claim is so at odds with conventional wisdom as to be easily dismissed, in which case anything else said is tainted or ignored. An example is stating as fact that Jesus was a vegetarian when trying to convince someone that they, too, should be vegetarian. Some Christian vegetarians are drawn to this contention because it connects their two strongest beliefs, while some activists like the claim because it receives media attention.

In the bigger picture, however, this claim, like others, can serve to harm the overall spread of the vegetarian message. Since the Bible portrays Jesus as eating fish, any Christian devout enough to base their eating habits on what Jesus did will probably believe the Bible. Others will conclude that vegetarian advocates will say anything to promote their cause, either by



intentionally lying to the public or by deceiving themselves.

Carl Sagan wrote: "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary [i.e. overwhelming and indisputable] proof." When we make an extraordinary claim without this proof accompanying it, we lose credibility. Claims in this category include: 75% of U.S. topsoil has been lost, with 85% of this directly attributable to raising livestock; an acre of trees disappears in the U.S. every eight seconds; and one burger costs 55 square feet of rainforest.

(While getting my M.S. in Forest Ecology, I worked with people who have done extensive first-hand research on tropical deforestation. I also dealt with other foresters, as well as people working with the Soil Conservation Service. As much as I tried, I was unable to find proof for the above oft-quoted claims. Rather, I found contrary statistics or complex chains of causation.)

Similar claims include: vegetarianism would extend the world's petroleum reserves 20-fold; more than half the water and 33% of raw materials used in the U.S. go to livestock production; vegetarianism can solve world hunger; an epidemic of Mad Cow disease is "right around the corner"; and eating meat causes impotence. If we are going to make such extraordinary claims in our literature, they must be backed up with overwhelming proof in that literature if we expect people to believe them.

◆ Another trap involves a single number from an uncertain range. One example is the claim that 25% of college males are sterile. Many years ago, I gave a pro-veg pamphlet to my college advisor (an open-minded individual) who dismissed it out of hand after coming to this. This is a reasonable reaction because research on the topic reveals information from a variety of sources that indicates 25% is much too high.



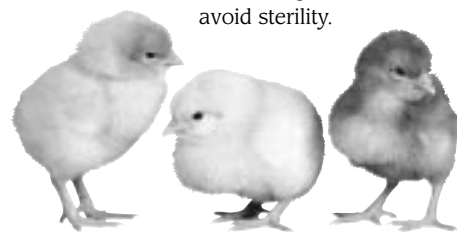
◆ Unwarranted generalization is a related problem, such as taking the results from a single study (e.g., heart attack rates of vegetarians compared to nonvegetarians) and generalizing those rates as facts for the entire population.

Often this is done when there are other studies indicating more conservative figures, or even opposing conclusions.

In *THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF CLINICAL NUTRITION* (1999:70S), Walter Willett gives an example of the difficulties we face in getting good information: "Although an association between red meat consumption and colon cancer has been observed in many studies, the available evidence suggests that there is little such relation with breast cancer. Within Seventh-day Adventist populations, little if any reduction in breast cancer incidence has been observed in comparison with the general population. Positive relations between consumption of red meat and breast cancer were noted in a few studies, but a tendency to report positive associations but not to publish negative findings may have resulted in an overall bias in the literature."

◆ Some also extrapolate epidemiological data from another country to our own. Many activists use the results of research done in other cultures as though it necessarily applies to vegans in the U.S. But there are a wide variety of confounding factors that make many extrapolations difficult, such as the amount of weight-bearing exercise in women as it relates to osteoporosis, and the fact that very little of this research is done on *actual* vegans.

◆ Another problem is connecting unrelated or loosely-related facts, such as arguing that one should be vegan to avoid sterility.



Most people who hear this could, if they desired, easily find information that would indicate that being vegetarian has little to do with sterility—e.g., the Endocrine Society lists nothing related to diet as a cause of male infertility.

Judging & Presenting Information

The general public is constantly being bombarded with "documented facts" from all sides (e.g., *THE ZONE/low-carb/EAT RIGHT FOR YOUR TYPE* diet gurus). These and others are *totally and passionately* convinced of the truth of their facts. We can't assume that the public will be swayed by our claims, just because we too are convinced that our facts are correct. We have to go beyond finding claims and research that appeal to us, and use materials that our target audience will find compelling and convincing. Specifically, we need to be appropriately skeptical of claims which support our position, and not dismissive of claims that don't. The pro-veg case is valid—and not easily dismissed—even with less fantastic contentions.

Nutritional Information

In order not to scare off potential vegans, some advocates don't mention any difficulties in being vegan. This can backfire by not preparing people well for a vegan diet: our experience indicates there are a large number of people who become vegetarian or vegan, don't feel healthy, and go back to meat-eating. As one nutrition professor recently told a director of Vegan Outreach, "You're the only vegan I know. I know a lot of ex-vegans, but no vegans."

For example, much vegan advocacy literature implies that being vegan reduces the risk of osteoporosis, and thus, vegans do not need to be worried if they get less calcium and vitamin D than non-vegans (most vegans do get significantly less calcium). However, recent studies do not show vegans to be more protected from osteoporosis than non-vegans.



Finding & Sharing Accurate Information

Getting accurate, complete, and unbiased information can be difficult. Until 1999, some of the information in Vegan Outreach's pamphlets had been based on secondary sources. When we finally had the time to go to the original sources, they often did not correspond to what was being attributed to them. Even first sources have problems, and thus cannot be viewed in isolation.

Being rigorous and thorough may seem like an overwhelming task. But in addition to being more effective at reaching our target audience, these efforts will increase our confidence in the information we are using, and may even lead to other important facts and understandings.



WHAT IS MEANT BY "RIGHTS"

In most of the world, human beings are granted basic rights. These fundamental rights are usually (at a minimum): the entitlement of individuals to have basic control of their lives and bodies, without infringing on the rights of others. In other words: the right not to be killed, caged, or experimented on against their will at the hands of moral agents (persons able to understand and act from a moral code). It is assumed that the reader believes humans to have these rights.

A DIFFERENCE OF DEGREE

Many say that humans deserve rights while other animals do not because humans have a greater level of certain characteristics: humans are more intelligent, creative, aware, technologically advanced, dominant, able to use language, able to enter into contracts, able to make moral choices, etc. Thus, humans deserve rights because they have a greater degree of these characteristics.

This argument has two problems:

- Rights are not relevant to a group (e.g., "humans"), but only to individuals. Individuals, not groups, are exploited and are capable of suffering and dying; individuals, not groups, are denied rights when there is a morally relevant reason (e.g., after committing a crime).

- Not all humans possess these characteristics to a greater degree than all other non-humans. There are non-humans who are more intelligent, creative, aware, dominant, technologically advanced (in reference to tool making), and able to use language, than some humans (such as infants or severely handicapped humans). Furthermore, many animals perform actions that, in humans, would be labeled moral behavior; oftentimes some animals act more ethically than many humans. If rights were granted at a certain threshold of intelligence, creativity, moral behavior, etc., some animals would have rights and some humans would not.

VALUE TO OTHERS

Some say that even though infants do not possess high levels of some characteristics, they should be granted rights because they are valued by other humans (their parents, for instance). By this argument, infants themselves do not possess any inherent rights, but receive them only if valued by an adult human.

At the same time, being valued by an adult human does not grant rights to pigs, parakeets, pet rocks, or Porsches. This is inconsistent:

**THOSE WHO EXPLOIT AND MISTREAT ANIMALS
GENERALLY DEFEND THEIR ACTIVITIES ON THE GROUNDS
THAT ANIMALS LACK EVEN BASIC RIGHTS.**

**IS THIS TRUE, OR DO PEOPLE DENY ANIMALS RIGHTS
SIMPLY TO RATIONALIZE EXPLOITING THEM?**

**IN SEARCHING FOR AN HONEST, CONSISTENT ETHIC,
IF ONE BELIEVES THAT HUMANS HAVE RIGHTS,
WE FIND THAT THERE ARE NO LEGITIMATE GROUNDS
FOR REJECTING RIGHTS FOR ALL OTHER ANIMALS.**

BEYOND MIGHT MAKES RIGHT

by Matt Ball & Jack Norris

for a first-principle discussion, see <http://www.veganoutreach.org/ethics.html>

either one is granted rights by being valued by an adult human—and thus everything valued by an adult human has rights—or there must be different criteria for granting rights.

People who believe that rights are granted to infants because of their value to adult humans would have to admit that infants who are not valued by other humans could be used in medical research. Indeed, this would be morally imperative in order to benefit infants who *are* valued by others. Most people would contend, however, that even unvalued orphans have rights. Therefore, rights must be based on other criteria.

If rights should be based on genes, why should the line be drawn at the species level? Why shouldn't the line be drawn at race, order, phylum, or kingdom?

BIOLOGICAL RIGHTS

Another argument is that humans have rights because they belong to the species *Homo sapiens*. In other words, a chimpanzee may very well be as intelligent (or creative, etc.) as some humans, but chimpanzees do not have rights because they are not members of the biologically-defined, rights-bearing species, *Homo sapiens*.

In the past, there have been a number of biological definitions of what constitutes a species. Today, it is defined genetically. The questions then become:

- Why should rights be deserved solely on the basis of a certain arrangement of genes?

- Among the genes that determine one's eye color, etc., which gene is it that confers rights?

- If rights should be based on genes, why should the line be drawn at the species level? Why shouldn't the line be drawn at race, order, phylum, or kingdom?

A thoughtful person might find having their rights (or lack thereof) determined by a molecular sequence to be a bit absurd. It is no better than basing rights on the pigmentation of one's skin (which is also determined by the individual's genetic code).

Consider if we could genetically engineer humanoids who were biologically distinct from humans (could not reproduce with humans) but shared human emotions and intelligence. Could we justifiably enslave, experiment on, and eat such people?

THE LAW

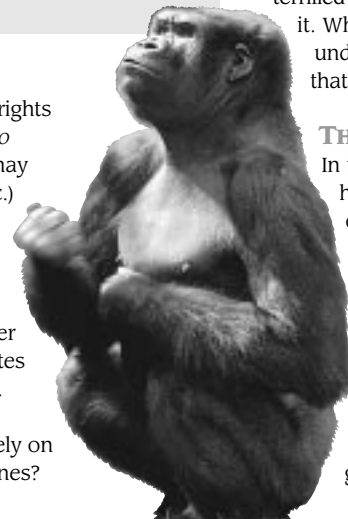
Some argue that infants and the mentally handicapped deserve rights because the current laws grant them rights. However, legal rights are not the same as moral rights. Legal rights change over time and by the whim of public or governmental opinion, whereas inherent moral rights do not. For example, the law in Nazi Germany did not respect the inherent rights of Jewish people.

**ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
ABSTRACT CONCEPTS**

It has been argued that non-humans do not deserve rights because they cannot understand abstract concepts, such as death. Yet anyone who has observed pigs in a slaughterhouse, for example, would find it difficult not to conclude that pigs understand death to the extent that they are terrified when confronted with it. What more do humans understand about death that is morally relevant?

THE GOLDEN RULE

In the past, humans may have respected each other's rights in order to survive without constant violence. Many people still function on this level. Yet over time, more civilized people have evolved a moral system that grants rights not just





APPEALS TO EMOTION AS JUSTIFICATION FOR VIVISECTION

Vivisection defenders often use emotional, hypothetical choices to make animal exploitation appear necessary. For example, concerning her daughter Claire, who has cystic fibrosis, Jane McCabe wrote in *NEWSWEEK* (Dec. 26, 1988): "If you had to choose between saving a very cute dog or my equally cute, blond, brown-eyed daughter, whose life would you choose?... It's not that I don't love animals, it's that I love Claire more."

A single dog experiment could never cure her child's disease, but the moral issue is whether personal attachment justifies harming innocent others. Since McCabe probably loves her daughter more than other children, would she endorse experimenting on other children (a scientifically more productive research strategy than experimenting on non-human animals) to save her child?

STRICT UTILITARIANISM

Still, many people view vivisection as a morally-defensible trade-off of lives. For example, the transplant surgeon involved in experiments such as the baboon heart/Baby Faye operation assumes that the life of one human is worth more than that of one baboon. This issue—interspecies transplants

—most clearly demonstrates the problem of determining morality from a utilitarian algebra of worth.

Using simple equations to determine the morality of actions, it would be acceptable to take the life of one human infant to continue the lives of two other infants in need of organs. Indeed, arguing from the perspective of worth, importance, or priorities, taking the life of one infant to extend the lives of two would be imperative. If this is not considered to be acceptable, is the first infant then "more important" than the two who are allowed to die?

Most people will agree that it is not justifiable to "sacrifice" one human for the "greater good," because each human has a right to live. This right is not to be violated, regardless of possible benefit to others. But when it comes to animals, they are assumed not to have this right.

SUFFERING

Searching for some characteristic to justify granting rights to *all* humans while denying rights to *all* other animals is futile. A moral system based on any of the characteristics discussed so far would either include many non-human animals or exclude some humans. To have a consistent set of ethics, a characteristic must be found that not only allows for the inclusion of all humans, but is also *morally relevant*. The only characteristic that simply and consistently meets these requirements is the capacity for suffering.

The question is not, *Can they reason?* nor, *Can they talk?* But rather, *Can they suffer?*

As Jeremy Bentham, head of the Department of Jurisprudence at Oxford University during the 19th century, said in reference to his belief that animals should be granted moral consideration, "The question is not, 'Can they reason?' nor, 'Can they talk?' But rather, 'Can they suffer?'"

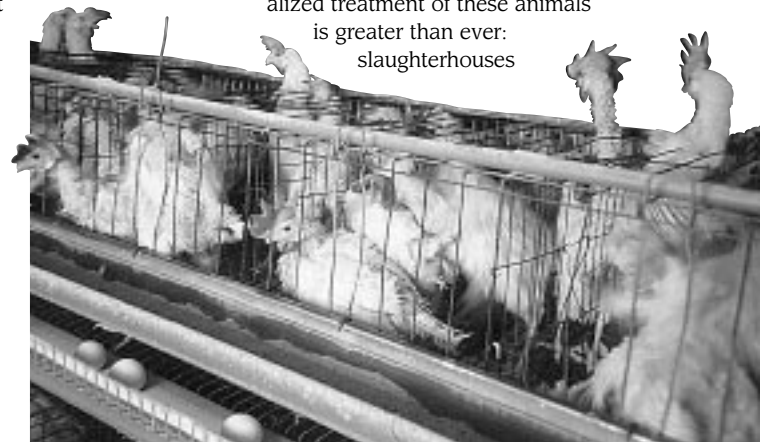
If a thing cannot suffer, then it does not matter to that being what happens to it. For example, computers have forms of intelligence (in many ways greater than that of any human), but these machines do not care whether they are turned off or even destroyed.

On the other hand, if a being is able to have subjective experiences of pleasure and pain, then it does matter—to that individual—what happens to it. Irrespective of intelligence, language, etc., a conscious, sentient being has interests in its existence—at the very least to avoid pain and to stay alive. Any complete ethic cannot ignore these concerns.

FOR THE LOVE OF ANIMALS

There are many who claim that they love animals and don't want them to suffer. Few oppose "humane" treatment of animals. But fewer still are willing to give up their prejudice of human superiority. Thus, the distance between the acceptable treatment and the actual, institutionalized treatment of these animals

is greater than ever:
slaughterhouses



based on self-protection, but on the Golden Rule—treat your neighbor as you would like to be treated. We know that we want to stay alive, do not wish to suffer, etc., and we assume others like us have the same desires. Being capable of looking beyond our own individual interests, we apply the Golden Rule even to people who could not harm us.

How much like us do beings have to be before we include them under the Golden Rule? At one time, women were not enough like the men who held power to be granted many rights. Neither were minorities in the United States and other societies. Even though the circle has expanded to include these individuals in the United States, today other animals are still not considered sufficiently like us for the majority of people to treat these animals as our neighbors under the Golden Rule.

How much like us do beings have to be before we include them under the Golden Rule?

THE SOUL

Some would say having a God-given soul is what gives one rights. There is no way to *prove* that humans have souls, just as there is no way to prove that all other animals lack souls. Those who insist that only humans have souls (and thus rights) are faced with a theological dilemma: it would require a cruel God to create beings with the capacity to feel pain and the desire to live, if these animals' purpose was to suffer at the hands of humans.

ANIMALS KILL EACH OTHER

Some defend humans killing animals on the grounds that animals kill each other in nature. These people would be hard pressed to show that our modern systems of animal agriculture or experimentation are "natural."

While it is true that some animals kill other animals in nature, moral philosophy is based on principles, not excused by the actions of others. As Peter Singer writes: "You cannot evade responsibility by imitating beings who are incapable of making [an ethical] choice." Some humans assault, rape, or kill other humans, yet we do not condone these actions.



are hidden away from populated areas, and vivisection labs are closed and locked.

Many scientists claim they use animals only when it is "absolutely necessary to save human lives." Ignoring the question of whether or not their contention of necessity is accurate and what is the ethical use of limited resources for medical care and research, these people are betrayed by their actions: how many vegetarian vivisectionists are there? They can hardly argue that it is necessary for them to kill animals for food.

In general, the animal welfarist position, which has been endorsed (but sparsely adopted) by the meat industry and pro-vivisection groups, is at odds with a truly respectful relationship based on the recognition of the rights of other animals. Welfarists concede that animals have interests, but these animals remain human property. Thus, the fundamental interests of the animals remain secondary to any interests of the owners. Laws based on the welfarist position, such as the federal Animal Welfare Act, have proven to be almost useless in every practical sense, as any use/abuse of an animal is allowed if deemed "necessary."

Trying to legislate a humane balance between the interests of animals and the interests of humans sounds good in principle and appeals to most. However, given that the current system still allows such atrocities as canned hunts, castration without anesthesia, factory farms, pain experiments, etc., animal abuse will continue until the current system recognizes that many animals are conscious, sentient beings whose rights are independent of the interests of humans.



MIGHT MAKES RIGHT

The children whom the Jane McCabes of the world hold up to defend vivisection have done nothing to deserve their disease. It is precisely these children's innocence that makes their plight so heartrending. However, anyone who claims to be ethical must also ask what animals have done to deserve being imprisoned in cages, being infected with our diseases, and being carved up in our labs. No one would suggest that these animals "deserve" to be exploited and killed in experiments. Rather, we kill these healthy, innocent beings because we have the power to do so and it is convenient for us. In short, we follow the principle of Might Makes Right.

The ability to do something does not make it right. We are capable of many actions that most contend are unacceptable—rape, abuse, murder, etc. If we have any claim to "superiority," it comes from our ability to act according to moral principles, guided by justice, fairness, and compassion. But we deny our moral ability when we selfishly harm others.

If animals can feel pain as humans can, and desire to live as humans do, how can we deny them similar respect?

ANIMAL MORALITY

Even though rights can only be granted consistently and justly on the basis of the capacity to suffer and not on the ability to make moral choices, there is ample evidence that many animals can and do make moral choices, often to the shame of "superior" humans. As Drs. Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan relate in *SHADOWS OF FORGOTTEN ANCESTORS*:

In the annals of primate ethics, there are some accounts that have the ring of parable. In a laboratory setting, macaques were fed if they were willing to pull a chain and electrically shock an unrelated macaque whose agony was in plain view through a one-way mirror. Otherwise, they starved. After learning the ropes, the monkeys frequently refused to pull the chain; in one experiment only 13% would do so—87% preferred to go hungry. One macaque went without food for nearly two weeks rather than hurt its fellow. Macaques who had themselves been shocked in previous experiments were even less willing to pull the chain. The relative social status or gender of the macaques had little bearing on their reluctance to hurt others.

Many of the photos in this booklet were provided courtesy of Farm Sanctuary, Green Acres Sanctuary, and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.



If asked to choose between the human experimenters offering the macaques this Faustian bargain and the macaques themselves—suffering from real hunger rather than causing pain to others—our own moral sympathies do not lie with the scientists. But their experiments permit us to glimpse in non-humans a saintly willingness to make sacrifices in order to save others—even those who are not close kin. By conventional human standards, these macaques—who have never gone to Sunday school, never heard of the Ten Commandments, never squirmed through a single junior high school civics lesson—seem exemplary in their moral grounding and their courageous resistance to evil. Among these macaques, at least in this case, heroism is the norm. If the circumstances were reversed, and captive humans were offered the same deal by macaque scientists, would we do as well? (Especially when there is an authority figure urging us to administer the electric shocks, we humans are disturbingly willing to cause pain—and for a reward much more paltry than food is for a starving macaque [cf. Stanley Milgram, *OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY: AN EXPERIMENTAL OVERVIEW*].) In human history there are a precious few whose memory we revere because they knowingly sacrificed themselves for others. For each of them, there are multitudes who did nothing.

If animals can feel pain as humans can, and desire to live as humans do, how can we deny them similar respect? As moral beings, how can we justify our continued exploitation of them?

We must stand up against the idea that might makes right. We must question the status quo which allows the unquestioned infliction of so much suffering. We must act from our own ethics, rather than blindly follow authority figures who tell us it's okay and even necessary to harm animals.

Discussing the macaque monkeys who chose to starve rather than inflict pain on another, Drs. Sagan and Druyan conclude, "Might we have a more optimistic view of the human future if we were sure our ethics were up to their standards?"

